

## Wide Awake by DefinitelyYou

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** A glimpse of Jancy (as Steve sees it), F/M, One Shot, Steve's Perspective

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Barbara "Barb" Holland, Dustin Henderson, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

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**Summary:**

Steve Harrington looks back at the rundown home with its hole in the wall and flashing lights and thinks of Nancy and Byers facing that thing, and his world turns upside down. He has no idea what he's going to do or how he can help—he just knows that he can't leave them alone to face a living nightmare.

# Wide Awake

## Author's Note:

Although I ship Jancy through and through, Steve Harrington remains one of my favorite characters on *Stranger Things*. Over the last month or so, I've been thinking about the night Steve went to the Byers house to apologize to Jonathan and then encounters the Upside Down. So I finally decided to explore those thoughts a bit more and ended up with this one shot. Take a look and share your thoughts--I'm always up for some good discussion of these amazing characters (thank you, Duffer Brothers). Enjoy!

*What is happening? What is happening? What is happening?*

Steve Harrington chants as he makes his escape from the house where he literally just witnessed his girlfriend, Nancy Wheeler, and his what—Classmate? Nemesis? Competition?—Jonathan Byers fight a real-life monster.

*This is crazy. This is crazy. What the hell am I doing?*

He thinks as his feet carry him back into said house, which he left as soon as he had the chance, wanting to get as far away from this nightmare as possible. But the moment he found himself at his car desperately trying to unlock the door, he looked back at the rundown home and thought of Nancy and Byers facing that thing, and his world turned upside down. He retraces his steps without a second thought, having no idea what he's going to do or how he can help—he just knows that he can't leave them alone to face a living nightmare.

He can hear Nancy scream Byers's name and a series of gun shots moments before he reaches the porch, and his mind finally catches up with his limbs. He propels himself into the door, pushing it open in one fell swoop, and he's greeted by utter chaos. At first his mind only registers the Christmas lights flashing incessantly, reminding him of a disco gone terribly wrong. His eyes soon focus on Nancy firing a gun

at the monster, and he is momentarily mesmerized by the scene before him. The monster's head looks like a flower, five petal-like sections open in full bloom. It's almost beautiful in its simplicity, a single bloom at the top of a long, billowy stem. And then he sees the teeth, hundreds of them lining each of the five petals, all leading to a mouth as dark as night.

*My god, it's going to eat us. Shit, shit, shit.*

Steve tears his eyes away from the monster and sees Byers racing to his feet leaving a discarded baseball bat (complete with nails serving as barbs at its tip) on the floor. Steve lunges across the living room, barely noticeable in the chaos at hand, grabs the weapon, and swings as hard as he can. He makes contact with the monster, knocking it away from Nancy. The monster turns to stand directly in front of him, and Steve raises the bat to line it up with its head and swings. Whack, a direct hit. He revels in the feeling of power the contact brings him, and he lines the bat up again. Bam, another hit. He swings a third time, and the monster starts to back down the hall.

Steve's in his element now, the familiar feel of the bat spinning in his hands as he lines up yet another swing. He hits the monster again, knocking it into the trap Nancy and Byers have set for it on the hallway floor. A loud snap and roar fills the room. Nancy calls to Byers, who appears suddenly at Steve's side, Zippo lighter in hand. As Nancy's request, Byers throws the lighter down the hall, and the entire room erupts into flame, engulfing the monster in seconds. The adrenaline of the last few moments is replaced by the terror of what Steve is witnessing. When the heat becomes too much to bear, Byers grabs a fire extinguisher and releases the trigger, filling the cramped hallway with fog. The three wait for the cloud to clear, huddled close together, with weapons at the ready.

When the fog clears, the monster is gone. All that is left is smoke, ash, scorch marks, and a bloody trap.

"It has to be dead. It has to be," Jonathan whispers.

Steve suddenly feels an overwhelming desire to reach out to Nancy, pull her into his arms and seek comfort in the girl (he thinks) he loves. But there's something different about her, something he can't

quite place (and who can blame her after what he did to her earlier in the day, shaming her publicly to account for his own insecurities). It's best to keep his distance.

And then the lights start to blink again, only this time they're controlled, slowly turning on and off and forming a path through the hallway to the front door. Each of them follow the lights, and he swears he hears Byers say "mom," but he's not sure. They walk through the living room and out the door and watch as the lights leave the house and move to the tall lamps that frame the long driveway.

Nancy and Byers move to the edge of the porch, and Steve lingers behind.

"Where's it going," Nancy asks, her body drawing closer to Byers.

"I don't think that's the monster," Jonathan responds, swaying slightly closer to Nancy as they continue to watch the progress of the lights.

Looking at the two of them, Steve can't help but think of magnets, drawn to each other with an invisible pull, something only they can feel. What he sees brings the feelings of rejection and jealousy that overwhelmed his senses and rational thought earlier in the day back to the surface. He feels like a third wheel, completely out of sync with the night's events and the two people standing in front of him. His chest fills with a sharp pain, almost like salt being rubbed into an open wound. But when they both turn around to face him, he sees something on their faces, something like relief that drives those uncomfortable feelings away.

"Thank you for coming back," Nancy suddenly says, embracing him in a hug. Byers looks away, muttering "yeah, thanks" as he turns.

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The threesome decide to head back to the junior high school, check in on the boys and someone named Eleven. Steve still doesn't understand what's happening, but he decides it's far easier to simply go with the flow. He makes his way back to his car with Nancy and

Byers, who has gathered a box full of odds and ends (a cassette tape, some colored pencils), close behind him. He finds the driver's side door wide open and his keys laying on the ground outside the door. When he reaches down to grab them, he notices Nancy getting into the backseat with Byers.

"What, am I your chauffeur now," Steve asks jokingly, trying to lighten the mood.

"Oh, god, sorry," she says shaking her head in confusion. "Too many police cars today," she adds sliding into the passenger's side of the car. Steve can't help but notice the look she shoots back at Byers who has settled himself in the back seat.

"Shit, that's right," Steve says as he follows her gaze in the rearview mirror, suddenly remembering that he left Byers in handcuffs earlier in the day, Nancy at his side. Catching Byers' eye, he says, "God, man, I'm really sorry. For earlier today. I was outta line," he begins. "I didn't mean . . ."

"You helped us fight a monster tonight. I think I'm over it," Byers interrupts with a smirk that doesn't quite pass for a smile.

"Can we just go, please," Nancy says, bringing Steve back to the task at hand. He starts the car, presses his foot hard on the gas, and gets the hell out of the Byers' driveway.

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Steve notices the flashing red and blue lights and crowd of local cops and state police gathered at the junior high school at least a block before they arrive at the scene. Nancy and Byers are out of the car even before he comes to a full stop, running to the line of cops blocking the way into the school. Steve thinks about getting out of the car himself, but decides to roll down his window instead. He still can't shake the feeling that he's intruding in some way.

Steve notices the tall deputy, the one Byers hit earlier in the day, move to the front, stopping the two of them from going beyond the

line. He tries his best to listen to what's being said. All he can make out is that the officer can't let them in, but that their friends and family are okay. He also encourages them to head to the hospital to meet up with them. Nancy asks about the girl, Eleven, but the officer shakes his head, stating that there wasn't a girl, only the three boys. Nancy turns to Byers with a look that Steve immediately recognizes, one that screams "bullshit" without her uttering a word.

Byers takes this moment to ask about the Chief, but the officer says he hasn't seen Hopper since earlier in the day. Byers's shoulders sag with the news, and he places his hand on Nancy's back for a brief moment as they turn to go. Steve notices for the first time that Byers has a bandage on his hand that matches his girlfriend's, and he wonders again what they hell happened between the two of them. The too-familiar feeling of jealousy returns to the pit of his stomach and starts to slowly rise to the back of his throat, nearly choking him on its bitter taste. Steve starts the car, anything to distract him for the sight in front of him.

Right before Nancy and Byers reach the car, a second officer calls out to the tall one—Callahan, Steve suddenly remembers—that they just heard from the chief. Byers stops in his tracks and runs back to the line of officers "What did you say," he asks anyone who will listen. He's ignored, but he must hear what he needs to know and runs back to the car.

"The hospital, we've got to go now," Byers says breathlessly.

"What happened? What did you hear," Nancy asks as she buckles in.

"The chief, he's at the hospital. With a boy," Byers says.

"Will," Nancy whispers. Byers nods his head and a smile slowly starts to form on his lips, transforming his face into someone almost happy, someone Steve hasn't ever seen before. When Steve turns to Nancy, he notices that her smile mirrors the one in the backseat, and he can't help but smile himself.

"Come on, Harrington, move it," Byers finally says, hitting his hand on the back of Steve's seat.

"Yeah, yeah, right. I'm on it," he says and squeals his tires as he backs up, feeling something akin to hope for the first time all day.

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Byers is the first person to rush into the Hawkins Hospital emergency doors, desperately looking for a sign of his family. Nancy follows close on his heels and is greeted almost immediately by her mother. Mrs. Wheeler pulls her into a hug, tears streaming down her face.

"Where have you been, Nancy," her mother asks.

"With Jonathan, at his house. We were, um, trying to find his mom and the Chief," she responds. Steve notices the how her eyes change slightly when she lies, growing even wider.

"Well, I'm glad you're here now," Mrs. Wheeler responds, embracing her a second time.

"Where's Mike?" Nancy asks. "Is he okay?"

"He's fine. He's in an exam room with your father and the other boys," she says.

"Oh thank god," Nancy says relieved. So far no one has taken the time to notice or at least acknowledge Steve's presence. For the first time in a long while, he's not the person everyone pays attention to, and he's surprised that he actually doesn't mind.

"Mom? Mom!" Steve hears Byers call from across the room.

Nancy immediately turns towards his voice, Steve following her lead.

"Jonathan? Jonathan! We found him. We found Will," Joyce Byers calls out as she runs into her son's arms, Chief Hopper following closely on her heels.

The mother and son embrace for at least a minute, and Steve feels yet another pang of jealousy, but different than what he felt earlier in the evening. He can't remember the last time he hugged his mom or shared any sort of genuine emotion with her, and here is Byers embracing his mom as if she's the most important person in the world. And he's sure Mrs. Byers feels the same way about her son.

Steve looks away for a moment, and sees Nancy and her mom standing with their arms around each other, identical smiles on their faces as they watch the scene unfold. Steve is suddenly feels as if the wind has been knocked out of him. He's truly taken aback by the love displayed among these families, the affection shared so freely. The sight is almost as strange as the monster he helped to slay just a short while ago.

Byers asking his mother if he can see Will pulls Steve out of his thoughts. He looks up to see Mrs. Byers whisper something to her son and turn to the Chief. The three of them huddle together, discussing something in hushed tones and whispers. Steve notices that Nancy is now by his side, and he both feels and then sees the connection she has to Byers. Her entire body is leaning forward, as if she's tethered to him in some invisible way. When Byers looks over to her, he can feel Nancy restraining herself to keep from going to him.

"Go," Steve says to Nancy, "find out what's going on."

She turns to him with a surprised look on her face, almost as if she'd forgotten he was there. She gives him a small smile, touches his arm, and races to the Byers family.

That sharp pain in his heart returns, more salt in his wound.

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They wait and wait and wait.

Steve sits among the Wheeler family, Chief Hopper, and Mike's other two friends (Dustin and Lucas he thinks are their names) in a small hospital waiting room, all eagerly anticipating word on Will. Nancy returned to them at least two hours ago, informing them that Will is stable but still unconscious and that Byers would let them know when they could see his brother. She then took a seat next to her mother, leaving him to sit between Nancy's father and Chief Hopper. Steve doesn't remember being so uncomfortable in his life.

No one talks. The boys have fallen asleep, except for Mike who looks as if he's lost in another world. The elation that Nancy showed earlier has faded, and he notices that she's looking more and more



distraught as the minutes pass. Chief Hopper bounces his leg continually, which is driving Steve insane, and Nancy's father has fallen asleep, his soft snores the only sound in the room aside from the hum of the hospital.

As he waits, his mind keeps replaying the evening's events. Images and sounds run through his mind but in no coherent order. It reminds him of a film strip that's been cut and then spliced back together—nothing make sense and just when you think you've figured it out, the film loops back on itself again. Steve feels his panic begin to rise again, and he begins to plot a quick escape from the claustrophobic room. And then Byers appears. He doesn't say anything; he simply nods at Mike and waits as Nancy's brother rouses his two friends. The three boys make their way out of the waiting room in a tangle of awkward arms and legs, followed calmly by Byers.

Steve looks over to Nancy, whose eyes are following the group as they make their way down the hall. He feels that magnetism again, the pull that is nearly drawing her out of her seat. "Go," Mrs. Wheeler says, and Nancy pops up immediately, almost running out of the door and down the hall.

The ruckus has caused Mr. Wheeler to wake up and a new energy to take over the room. Left now with only the adults and feeling more out of place than ever, Steve simply sits and listens as Nancy's parents and Chief Hopper speculate as to Will's condition, and Mrs. Wheeler tries to drag more information out of the Chief, who isn't giving up a thing. It's a fascinating sparring match between two distinct forces, and Steve is mesmerized.

A few minutes later, Nancy returns to the waiting room looking utterly wrecked.

"Are you okay, honey?" Mrs. Wheeler asks.

"Steve, can you take me home now, please?" Nancy asks turning to him. He hops up immediately, muttering "Sure, of course, no problem."

"I don't know if that's a good idea, Nance," her mom replies. "I don't want to leave you alone, and your dad and I need to be here for

Mike.”

“Mom, I’ll be fine, and Steve can stay with me. I’m just really tired, and now that I know Will is okay, I just want to get some rest. It’ll be fine,” Nancy replies.

“Okay then,” her mom says. “Steve, you’ll stay with her until we get home?”

“Yes, of course,” he responds in turn. Mrs. Wheeler gets up and hugs her daughter, who turns on her heels so quickly that Steve has to jog to keep up with her.

“Nancy, hey Nancy,” he says as he catches up to her. “Everything okay? What happened with Will?”

“I don’t want to talk right now. I just want to go home,” she says, and Steve knows not to push her any further at the moment.

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They don’t talk the entire way to her house. When they arrive, Nancy asks Steve to sit on the family room couch while she goes up to her room. It’s the first time he’s entered her house through the front door, and it feels like a shift in their relationship. Perhaps he doesn’t need to worry about Byers after all—he’s the one with Nancy now, comforting her after a nightmarish day—and he slowly starts to relax, taking off his shoes and settling in on the couch.

When Nancy comes back to the family room, she’s changed into a pair of sweatpants and an oversized striped sweater that he doesn’t recognize. When she approaches the couch, she throws a taped up photo onto his lap.

“What’s this?” he asks.

“Just look at it,” she responds.

“Wait, is this one of Byers’ photos that we tore up? Why in the hell would you keep this? God, Nancy . . .”

“Steve, just look at it,” she interrupts firmly.

He takes a quick look and immediately sees Barb sitting on the diving board of his pool. He looks a bit more closely and then he sees it—the monster, the thing they fought tonight. His stomach sinks.

“Oh my god,” he whispers.

“I know,” she responds. “That thing took Barb and Will. The only difference is that Will survived, Barb didn’t,” she says close to tears.

“What do you mean? If Will survived, Barb may still be . . .”

“No, she’s not, Steve. Jonathan got Will back tonight, and I’m happy for him. I’m glad we helped kill that monster. But Barb . . . Barb isn’t coming back, and I don’t know what to do,” she says, starting to sob.

Steve pulls Nancy into his lap and tries to comfort her the best he can. She cries into his shoulder, and Steve puts the pieces together in his head.

“So that monster was at my house that night? How did we not see it? Where did it come from? And why didn’t Byers do anything when he saw it?”

He can’t stop the questions flying out of his mouth, and his anger at Byers grows again. How can he have done nothing after seeing that thing through his camera lens?

“Jonathan didn’t see it when he took the photo. It lives in another dimension, that’s all we know. I don’t understand it, but it’s true. And the flashing lights you saw tonight, that’s our only connection to that world. Jonathan’s mom figured that out,” she says.

“But the photo?” Steve asks again.

“I noticed Barb in one of the photo scraps on the ground that day at school, when you confronted Jonathan, so I grabbed what I could and put the pieces together at home. Once I saw the monster, I found Jonathan, and we figured it out. Will’s disappearance, Barb, his mom’s visions, all of it,” she says exhaustedly.

“So that’s what you two were doing—looking for this thing?” he asks.

Nancy nods her head. He can tell that she's reached her limit for the night.

"I'm sorry about Barb, Nancy, I truly am," he says, kissing her forehead.

"I know," she says, cupping his face in her hand in acknowledgement.

"You should sleep, okay," Steve says again, helping Nancy settle herself more firmly in his lap.

"We still need to talk about the movie theatre," Nancy says as she yawns. "You're not out of the woods yet."

"Yeah, I know. I'm, I'm so sorry, Nancy," he responds. She hums in acknowledgement and then slowly drifts into a restless sleep.

As he watches her sleeping, Steve thinks more about the events of the past week, and the realization settles in that his world is not as it seems.

*How can she sleep?*

He's never been so wide awake in his life.